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an experiment

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Jane Hyslop
an experiment
artists' book



Introduction

Much of my work has explored abandoned places such as post-industrial sites and examines indigenous flora and how it encroaches on these places. The underlying thrust of the work examines the push and pull of the relationship between human activity and nature's resilience.

MERTZTEXTE

In June 2010 I attended, presented and exhibited work at MERTZTEXTE, a symposium that drew together an international group of delegates including artists, historians and writers hosted by Littoral, <http://www.littoral.org.uk>. It was held at Cylinders Estate where Kurt Schwitters worked on his final merzbau, the Merzbarn. The Merzbarn still exists on the site and there are efforts to engage artists in making work and having dialogue on all aspects of Schwitters' practice. The symposium explored Schwitters' text based work and the time the artist spent in the Lake District. I was interested in this from the perspective of a book artist and became focussed on Schwitters' relationship with Harry Pierce, the man who owned Cylinders estate and who encouraged Schwitters to work there.

Symposium participants included:

Simon Cutts Coracle Press, <http://www.coracle.ie/>

Lars Fiske Norwegian book artist / illustrator, <http://www.fiske.no/>

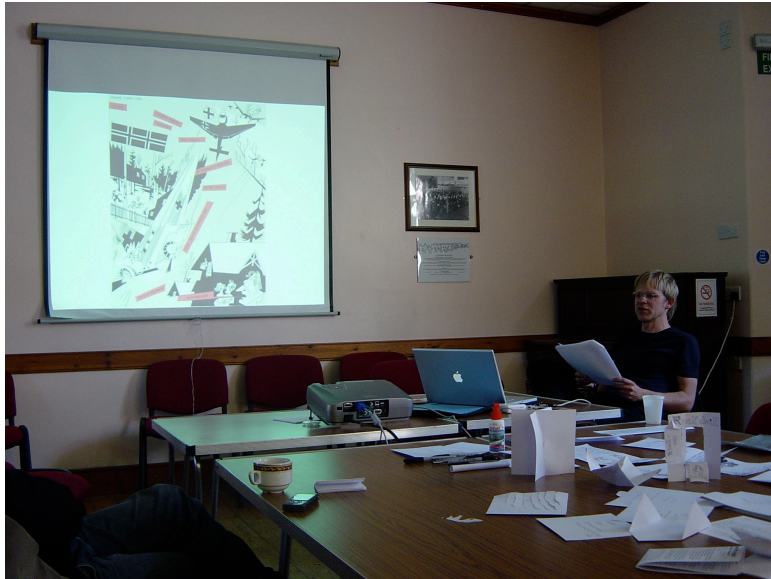
Gwendolen Webster 'Kurt Schwitters - A Journey Through Art'
<http://www.hatjecantz.de/controller.php?cmd=detail&titzif=000025>

Chris Taylor, Craig Wood Leeds University / Wild Pansy Press,
<http://www.wildpansypress.com/>

Marit Meunzberg and David Berridge, <http://www.marit.co.uk/>
<http://verysmallkitchen.com/>



MERTZTEXTE delegates gather at Elterwater Village Hall



Lars Fiske delivers his presentation.



The Merzbarn 2010

Field Trip July 2010

In July 2010 I returned to Cylinders Estate with the intention of making some work in response to the place and to record it in advance of planned projects there which aim to reinstate some of Harry Pierce's garden to its former condition.

In 2010 the garden had become wild and it was fascinating to record and study how the passage of time had affected Pierce's initial intentions and ambitions which are clearly described in his journal.

I took time to study the journal in which Pierce noted the plants he used, drew plans and described problems he encountered. I found this research valuable in planning my visual response and it had profound influence on the work I made.



In 1942 Pierce embarked on what he described as his experiment where he aimed to create an estate in miniature. Somewhere which would sustain his family and allow him to create a garden where he mixed exotic plants with indigenous species, 'giving the impression that the garden was planted by nature.'¹ He stated that he wished to explore the possibility of 'forming a combination of man's imagination and nature's lavish profusion.'² This corresponds with my interests in both wild and cultivated places. Pierce wrote: 'The knowledge that by your imagination, your planning and your labour you are accumulating information of the growth of plants and shrubs for the guidance of others, and above all, that you are painting on a large

¹ 'Cylinders Farm, An Experiment', Harry Pierce, 1952

² as above

canvas and with living pigments, a picture of great beauty.'³
Schwitters' practice is reflected in Pierce's ideas and each man's creativity is evidenced in this unique setting. Schwitters understood this when he said 'Pierce...is a genius...he lets weeds grow, yet by slight touches he transforms them into compositions as I create art out of rubbish.'⁴



³ as above

⁴ 'Schwitters: or the Allusions of the Imagination', Magazine of Art, Carola Giedon-Welcker, 1948

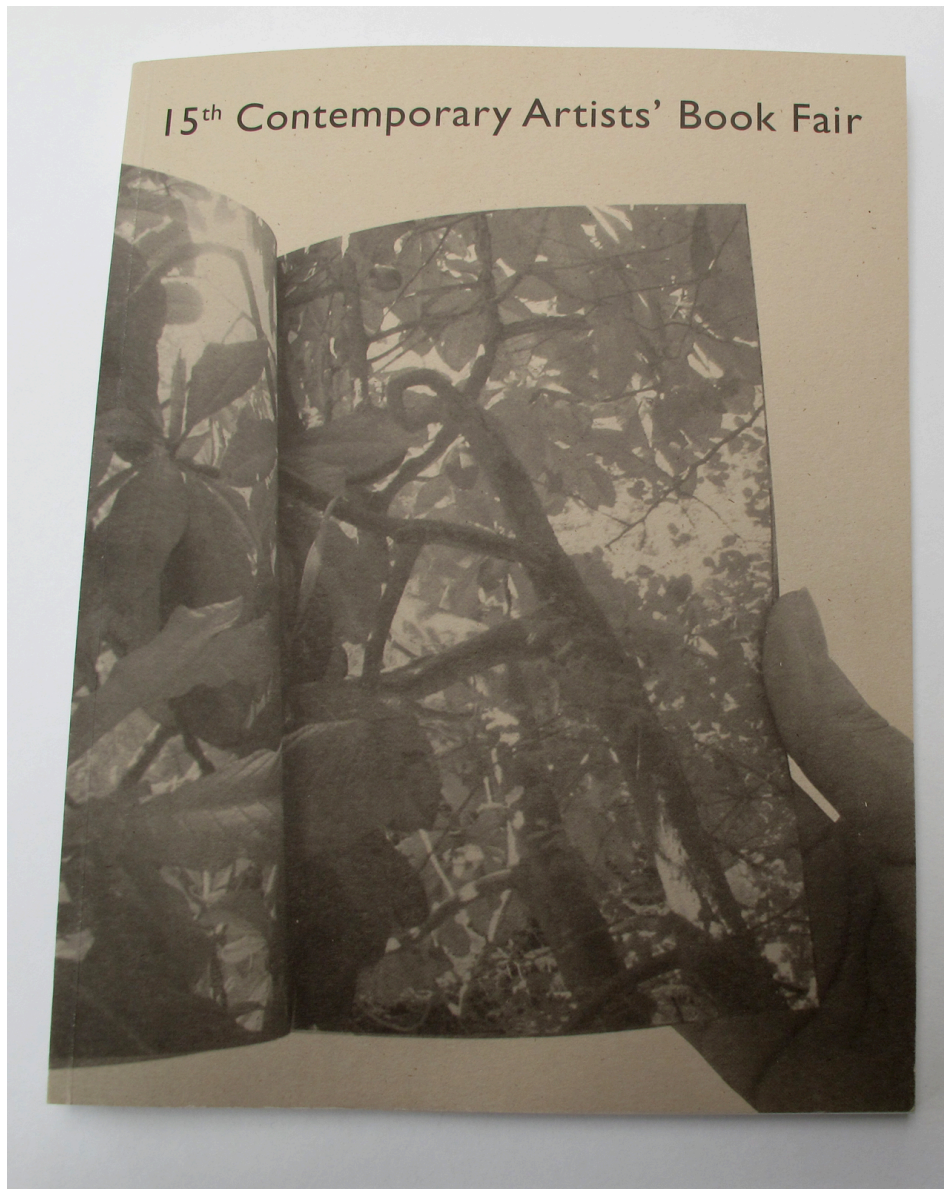
Production

This small photographic document is bound in a way so that full impact is gained from the coloured pages which are folded at the front edge to prevent any paper edges disturbing the visual continuity. It is tightly bound at the spine to give the heart of each spread an intensity that echoes the experience of exploring Pierce's garden. Explanatory text is kept to a minimum and is set within the folds of the first and last pages so it does not automatically interfere with the imagery. The book concentrates on the garden, the Merzbarn not making an appearance until the end of the book. Great consideration was taken in choosing the paper for the book. The pages are printed on Pescia Book Paper that offers a soft, tactile sensation during handling.



'an experiment'; made in an edition of 50; digitally printed on Pescia Book Paper and Lambeth Cartridge; 24pp; 110 x 150 x 8mm

Impact



'an experiment' featured on the cover of the Leeds Artists' Bookfair 2012

First exhibited on my stand at London Art Book Fair 2010, Whitechapel Gallery
Acquired by Tate Collection 2010, UWE Collection 2011

Featured on the cover of the catalogue for the Leeds Artists' Bookfair 2012.

Selected for Correspondence, Poland 2012 - 2014 and Kaleid, London 2012.

Exhibited at: Glasgow Artists' Book Fair 2012, Fruitmarket Gallery Artists' Bookfair 2012, Scottish Poetry Library Artists' Bookfair 2012.

<http://www.merzbarn.net>